

Comparing the New Medicare-Approved Discount Cards



Senior Health Insurance
Information Program

Ask SHIIP

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Q: How do I compare the different Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards to decide which one is right for me?

A: In Indiana, there have been more than 40 companies approved to offer Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards. It can be good to have choices. It can also be overwhelming. Before comparing, you need to answer the following questions:

1. What kind, if any, drug coverage do you have now?
2. Do you already have any discount cards? How much of a discount are you receiving?
3. What medications are you currently taking? Which drugs are the most expensive?
4. Which pharmacy(s) do you use? Would you be willing to switch? How about mail order?

Since you can choose only one Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Card, it is important to pick the one that gives you the best overall discount on your medication costs.

Remember these cards are being offered by private companies, not by Medicare, and the discounts and covered drugs will vary from card to card.

Now that you have gathered the pertinent personal information, how do you go about comparing the 40 plus cards available? You could call each company and compare their literature, but it would take a long time and be difficult. Medicare's website at www.medicare.gov has set up a database that narrows your search and makes it much easier to do this comparison. If you are one of the many who do not want to touch a computer, you will need to do one of the following: find a friend or relative who will help you, or call 1-800-MEDICARE and a customer service representative will do the search for you and then mail you a hard copy, or call SHIIP at 1-800-452-4800 ext. 4 to find out how you can have a local SHIIP volunteer help you. If you are Internet savvy, I urge you to volunteer your help to friends and neighbors.

Some pharmacies are also offering to help their customers compare cards. This can be helpful, but remember they will only talk to you about the cards that they participate in and may not have details on all aspects of the program.

Doing the search on line at www.medicare.gov will give

you specific information on prices for your medications at various pharmacies in your area using different cards. Here are some tips for your search:

- Always make sure you scroll down (move the text down) so you don't miss any questions or information.
- Answer all the questions including the financial ones. Even though anyone with Medicare can sign up for a card regardless of income, by putting in your financial status, you may learn of assistance that is available to you.
- Note that **NO** private questions such as Social Security number are asked.
- When you reach the page with "savings card: program comparison" you will see overall savings presented as a range (for example \$29.55 - \$33.69). This is not the end of your search. Mark the cards you would like to look at further. Scroll down some more and hit continue. This will take you to the page that gives you specifics by drug and pharmacy. You can review this information on line or print it out.

Call SHIIP at 1-800-452-4800 for a free packet on the Medicare-Approved Drug Discount Cards.

Address your questions to:

Ask SHIIP
311 W. Washington Street
Ste. 300
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Or www.state.in.us/idoi/shiip
1-800-452-4800

SHIIP is a free, unbiased counseling program provided by the Indiana State Department of Insurance. For assistance, call your local SHIIP site to make an appointment or call the state office at 1-800-452-4800 to obtain a list of local SHIIP sites.